

Dear Senators and Representatives:

As a concerned Connecticut parent of 2 public school children and as a member of the Killingly Town Council, I would like to submit the strongest opposition to the proposed Bill No. 374. This testimony may be read at the March 8 public hearing.

S.B. No. 374 is an unjust and uncalled-for invasion of the rights of both public school families and home-school families for three primary reasons.

1) The bill would force ("require") parents to submit their children to psychological evaluation by an unspecified and state-selected representative of the health profession. This far over-reaches the purpose of the State Board of Education, which is to provide an equal, that is public, education to children, not to oversee their psychological health. Requiring children to undergo these invasive evaluation violates the parental right to monitor to which ideologies regarding healthcare their children are exposed at young ages. Furthermore, the materials used and questions asked during these evaluations may in fact violate the conscience of the parents whose children are being examined.

2. The bill is so vague that it leaves open-ended the question of to whom access to the results of these evaluations would be given. The phrase "the results of which shall be disclosed only to the child's parent or guardian", in no way protects the family from disclosure of confidential medical information to the state should the physician (who is state-appointed) deem it necessary.

3. While recent events in Newtown, CT, and other academic institutions are tragic and horrible, the state is ill-equipped and has no right to take violence as an opportunity to assume a parental role of our children. As local head of a home-school support program and as a mother "on-the-ground", I can testify that it is the parents and the grassroots community of Connecticut that is most able to offer support, oversight, and correction of behavioral and mental health issues. Home-schooled generally have more contact with a wide age-range of people, more one-on-one interpersonal conversations with adults (especially their parents), heavy involvement in social activities that require healthy behaviors, and more time to be physically active each day than their public school counterparts. Home-schooled children with special needs have personalized contact with non-special-needs children who love them and are required to help them (again, by parents and adults from the community). This profile suggests that the home-school model in fact has the potential to promote mental and behavioral health more effectively than any state-sponsored evaluation.

In short, this bill contains a poorly defined requirements that violate parents' rights as the primary educators of their children. While I commend the public school system for providing services to previously diagnosed children with special needs, the state should leave the question of diagnoses to the parents and their freely chosen healthcare professionals. As a member of the Killingly Town Council, I will propose a resolution to the

Town and the Board of Ed to issue the strongest condemnation of the violation of parental rights and do whatever we can to obstruct implementation. I will also say that I will NEVER allow my children to be "evaluated" by anyone without my EXPRESS WRITTEN CONSENT AND ALSO ATTENDING ANY SUCH EVALUATION. I CAN ASSURE YOU I WILL NOT ALLOW THIS TO HAPPEN OTHERWISE!

Thank you.
Brian R. Gosper
Killingly Town Council